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SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

The report provides information concerning the variety and content of secondary social studies electives in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The main goal of the report is to encourage the exchange of ideas and curriculum information among educators. Questionnaires, inquiring about the social studies curriculum for grades 7-12, were mailed to the social studies coordinators of each of the twenty-one districts in Montgomery County. Responses were obtained from nineteen of the twenty-one school districts. Because of course offerings for grades 7-9 were found to vary little (the few exceptions are noted in the report), the study deals primarily with the many elective programs offered at the high school level. A list of social studies electives together with the school districts offering each elective is provided in Part I of the report. Part II discusses length of study and admission requirements. Marking systems and credit given for electives are included in Part III. The final part of the study presents instructional techniques. Listings of documents pertaining to secondary social studies which may be of interest to educators are provided. Curriculum guidelines are also included from the Regulations of the Pennsylvania State Board of Education. (Author/RM)

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February 1971

Prepared by:

Research and Information Services
for Education
117 W. Ridge Pike
Conshohocken, Pennsylvania 19428

Robert D. McCarraher
Project Coordinator

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide information concerning the variety and content of the social studies electives offered in Montgomery County schools. Initially this survey originated as a request from Mr. James H. Baxter, Jr., a social studies teacher at Upper Merion High School, for information concerning social studies electives. R.I.S.E. mailed questionnaires to the social studies coordinators of each of the twenty-one school districts in Montgomery County, inquiring about their social studies curriculum for grades 7-12. However, as the course offerings for grades 7-9 vary little (the few exceptions are noted in the report) this study necessarily deals with the elective program of the high school, especially grades 11-12, where the variety begins. Responses were obtained from nineteen of the twenty-one school districts.

In the overview (pages 3-7) a summary of the results is presented describing each of four major divisions of the study. The results in the overview reveal a broad base of similarities but also point out noticeable differences in the variety and composition of elective courses available in the reporting school districts. In addition, a complete listing of the course offerings, coded by school districts, is presented for your reference. In this study schools are referenced by numbers. To aid in the interpretation of the data the number for each school district and the name of the respondent to the questionnaire are presented in the Acknowledgements, page ii.

While admitting the limitations inherent in any study based on data from questionnaires--no matter how objective and closed-ended the designer tries to make the questionnaire--we hope the survey will prove valuable in the future development of the social studies curriculum in Montgomery County schools. In particular, we encourage the exchange of ideas and curriculum information among

educators of the twenty-one school districts of the county. If this report has fostered this objective, it will have proved worthwhile.

OVERVIEW

I. COURSE OFFERINGS

The social studies courses available for students in grades 7-9 are, for the most part, the basic ones of American and World Cultures. However, one school (19) has replaced World History at the seventh grade level with Urbanology. Because the student response to the elective program has been so great, another school (3) is considering patterning the whole social studies curriculum on a semester basis. In one school district (2) the social studies program (grades 7-12) is under study with revisions aimed at expanding the elective program. In yet another school district (6) the social studies program for grades 9-12 has been revised for the 1971-72 term, with the major changes being an all elective program for seniors, which juniors may choose if their schedule permits. Only one school district (8) offers an elective in the junior high school: urban affairs for ninth graders. For grades 10-12 there is a more varied course offering. All school districts but one (4) offer electives on the senior high school level. Of course, the extent and variety of the electives vary from school to school. The following is a list of social studies electives for grades 10-12 and school districts offering each elective:

Elective	School District
Afro-American Studies	5, 8, 9, 17, 19
American Culture/History Seminar	5, 10, 11, 13
American Government	17
Ancient History	3
Anthropology	3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 16
Asian Cultures	5, 6, 7, 17
Behavioral Science	6, 17
Climatology	7
Comparative Government & Cultures	14, 15, 17
Consumer Education	2, 6
Contemporary American History & Economics	1
Contemporary Social Problems	5, 6, 12, 17, 19
Contemporary World Affairs	17
Criminology	3
Current Affairs	6
Economics	3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 17, 19
Economic Geography	17
European History	9, 14, 16, 17, 19
Family Living	13, 17
Foreigh Relations	17
Great Issues	2
History of Art	1
History of the Soviet Union	17
Humanities.	1
Independent Study	3, 14
International Relations	6
Introduction to the Social Studies	13
Minority Groups	17
Pennsylvania History	17
Physical Geography	17
Political Geography	17
Political Science	1, 3, 9, 19
Problems of Democracy	11, 17
Psychology	3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13 14, 16, 18, 19
Sixties, The	2
Sociology	1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14 15, 19
Twentieth Century World	9, 17
United States as a World Power	5
War in the Modern World	5
World Cultures.	8
World Geography	7
World Problems	8

As the above compilation shows, a great variety of social studies electives exist in Montgomery County high schools. Of course, the number available in each school district varies. Fourteen of the nineteen responding districts offer three or more elective courses in their social studies departments. A detailed breakdown is presented in the following table:

Number of Electives	School District
1	12, 18
2	10, 15
3	2, 11, 16
4	13
5	1, 7, 14
6	8
7	19
8	3, 9
10	6
12	5
20	17

In all but three school districts (5, 8, 19) electives are available only to students in grades eleven or twelve. However, as already indicated, some schools are reviewing their social studies programs, especially in the area of elective courses. The next three sections of this report deal in more detail with the composition of the elective courses.

II. GROUPING, LENGTH OF STUDY, AND ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

About one and a half times as many social studies electives are grouped heterogeneously as homogeneously; seventy-six are grouped heterogeneously and thirty homogeneously*. There are also about one and a half times as many one semester electives as those lasting two semesters; sixty-three one semester and forty-two two semesters. There is only one "mini-elective", a half semester course in Asian Cultures for exceptional students (6). In only a few cases are admissions requirements necessary before the student is allowed to take an

* The total number of elective courses in this section is greater than those in the comprehensive listing because of the combination of similar electives on the previous page.

elective. The Asian Cultures Course, mentioned above, is designed for exceptional students, i.e., those having exceptionally high aptitude and achievement as recorded on test scores and in grades. One school (11) limits a seminar in U.S. history to the top fifteen students screened by the faculty and guidance department. Also, one social studies department (13) screens the students before allowing them to take an American Culture Seminar and an Introduction to the Social Sciences. One elective, Behavioral Science, (17) is an advanced college placement course. As a prerequisite to taking an elective one social studies department (19) requires that the student have good reading ability, high interest, and the recommendation of the counselor. A few schools (5, 7, 15) have a grade requirement (in all but one case a "B" average) as a prerequisite. In all other cases successful completion of courses undertaken in prior grades is the only requirement before a student is allowed to take an elective.

III. MARKING SYSTEMS AND CREDIT GIVEN

For all electives but one the marking system is of the traditional letter (A to F) grade or number (0 to 100) variety. In one case, a sociology elective, (15) a Pass-Fail marking system is employed with "S" or "U" for satisfactory or unsatisfactory. In another school district (1) a senior student can elect Pass-Fail in all social studies courses. For all electives except one, a psychology course (3), students receive some kind of credit. Most of the schools give the standard one credit--or in some cases half credit--for electives.

IV. INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES

According to the questionnaires, most of the school districts use the "traditional" or "varied" method of instruction. A few schools (2, 4, 7, 15, 18) employ the multi-media approach to instruction. Many schools (2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15) offer independent study, mostly with seminar or advance type courses. One school (4), although it does not offer electives, employs independent study in all its social studies courses. Team teaching is used by four schools (1, 5, 8, 19). One school (3) stated that it was experimenting with team teaching in American history. Three schools (4, 7, 9) employ some type of field work. In one school (16) four teachers each have an individual area, the students rotating from one area to another every nine weeks. One social studies department (9) employs the Inquiry method of instruction. To increase interest among the students, one junior high school (19) has also started the Inquiry or Discovery approach to history.

RELATED R.I.S.E. MATERIAL

Listed below are R.I.S.E. documents pertaining to secondary social studies. These documents are prior R.I.S.E. searches consisting of abstracts, bibliographies, and excerpts from material (e.g., journals, microfiche, etc.) pertaining to particular research topics. School district personnel interested in reviewing these documents may call Mr. Robert McCarraher at 825-9141.

Social Studies	Document Number
Advancement School Programs	317-3
Basic Concepts Within Disciplines of Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, and English	371-3
Elementary Social Studies	321-1
Inductive Method in Social Studies	244-2
Innovations in Language Arts & Social Studies	164
Interdisciplinary Approach to Teaching Social Studies (K-12)	70
Methods of Teaching Social Studies: Elementary	104
Middle Schools Social Studies	336-1
Social Studies: History of Minority Groups	391-3
Social Studies Projects in the United States: Innovations in Social Studies	293-2
Social Studies Curriculum	
Social Studies Curriculum Explaining Law and Order	334-3
Social Studies Units	
Asian Studies Curriculum	122

Curriculum Guideline

Chapter Seven of the "Regulations of the State Board of Education" (issued March 14, 1969) sets forth the general curriculum regulations for the school districts of Pennsylvania. Pertinent sections pertaining to the social studies curriculum are quoted for your information and guidance.

7-100 GENERAL PROVISIONS

7-110 General Policy - It shall be the policy of the State Board of Education through the Superintendent of Public Instruction to delegate to a Board of School Directors the greatest possible flexibility in curriculum planning consistent with a high quality of education for every pupil in the Commonwealth.

7-111 Exceptions to the Curriculum Regulations - The Superintendent of Public Instruction may grant exceptions to individual regulations contained in this chapter, where necessary to adapt these regulations to school district curriculum needs.

7-112 Experimental Programs - The Superintendent of Public Instruction may waive any or all of the regulations contained in this chapter for experimental programs. Such experimental programs shall be evaluated by the Superintendent yearly and may be terminated at the Superintendent's discretion.

7-122 UNIT OF CREDIT

For general course planning purposes only, a unit of credit shall be defined as a planned course of 120 clock hours. Special attention shall be given by school authorities to varying the clock hour requirements in accordance with Sections 7-130 and 7-140 of these regulations.

7-123 COURSES

a. Planned Course - A planned course shall consist of at least:

1. a written statement of objectives to be achieved by students.

2. content to be used to reach objectives for which credit is awarded at the junior high and senior high levels.

3. expected levels of achievement.

4. procedures for evaluation.

b. Course Offering - The term course offering, as applied to Section 7-233, shall be taught in each secondary school where there is sufficient student demand. Sufficient student demand shall be determined according to either Section 1604 of the Public School Code of 1949, as amended, or school district policy which does not conflict with Section 1604.

c. Authorized Course - An authorized course, as applied to Section 7-234, is defined as a planned course approved for inclusion in the secondary school curriculum.

7-140 INDIVIDUALIZING INSTRUCTION

7-141 Independent Study - Independent Study courses may be offered for credit.

7-142 Course Credit Flexibility - Students may earn course credit through correspondence study, attendance at summer school, Saturday classes, study at summer camps, or in any other manner considered appropriate by the principal and approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

7-143 College Advanced Placement - College level advanced placement courses may be offered as part of the senior high school program of studies.

7-150 SPECIAL INSTRUCTION TO BE PROVIDED IN THE CURRICULUM OF ALL SCHOOLS

7-153 Secondary Social Studies - During grades 7 through 12, six units of social studies shall be offered, of which four units shall be required.

The four required units shall consist of two units of World Cultures and two units of American (U.S.) Culture which shall be interdisciplinary studies taken from the social sciences (anthropology, economics, geography, history, philosophy, political science, psychology and sociology). The two units of electives may be either single-discipline or interdisciplinary courses.

Of the six units, at least two units shall be taught in grades 10 through 12 and be required for graduation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

School District	Number	Respondent
Cheltenham	1	Keith B. Cooper
Colonial	2	John R. Kilpatrick
Hatboro-Horsham	3	Fred O. Dietzel
Jenkintown	4	Fay Grossman
Lower Merion	5	Larry Davis
Lower Moreland	6	Samuel A. Clay
Methacton	7	Richard K. Dyer
Norristown Area	8	Abraham M. Berger
North Penn	9	Paul T. Hennig
Perkiomen Valley	10	Nelson W. Yeakel
Pottsgrove	11	David H. Gruelich
Pottstown	12	William H. McCabe
Souderton Area	13	Stephen Knight
Spring-Ford Area	14	John Lazochick
Upper Dublin	15	Millard J. Bekmezian
Upper Merion Area	16	James H. Baxter, Jr.
Upper Moreland	17	Louis L. Hauser
Upper Perkiomen	18	Lawrence W. Nase, Jr.
Wissahickon	19	John Albrect